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SPEECH
OF
HON. A. IVERSON, OF GEORGIA,
ON
THE PACIFIC RAILROAD.

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, JANUARY 6, 1859.

The Senate having resumed the consideration of the Pacific Railroad bill—
Mr. IVERSON said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: When this bill was under consideration at the last session, I submitted some amendments to it, the object of which was to provide for the constructions of two Pacific railroads—a northern and a southern road. The bill then reported to the Senate by the select committee, and which is the same now before us, provided for Government aid to only one road, and confined its eastern terminus to some point on the Missouri river, between the mouths of the Big Sioux and Kansas rivers, and its western terminus to San Francisco. It proposed to grant the alternate sections of the Government lands for twenty miles on each side of the road on its whole route, making twenty sections, or twelve thousand eight hundred acres to the mile. It also proposed to contract with the person or persons, company or companies, who should undertake its construction, for the transportation of the Government mails for twenty years, and to agree to advance, by way of pay for this service, in regular and equal portions, \$25,000,000 in Government bonds, as sections of twenty miles should be completed and put in operation; the company constructing the road to refund back this advance pay in railroad service, in carrying the mails, soldiers, sailors, munitions of war, and other Government stores and property, at certain rates of compensation to be agreed upon in the contract, and limited in the bill itself.

My amendments proposed that the President should enter into a similar contract, or contracts, for the construction of two roads, the eastern terminus of one to be on the Missouri river, anywhere north of the thirty-sixth parallel of north latitude and within the boundaries of the United States, and ending at any point or place on the Pacific coast that might be selected by the contracting party; the other road to be located on any route south of the thirty-sixth parallel of north latitude, west of the Mississippi, within the United States, and terminating at any point on the Pacific selected by the contractors. My plan proposed a similar grant of land to each road of twenty sections to the mile, and a contract with each road to the extent of \$12,500,000 in Government bonds, for mail and other Government service, to be advanced in like proportionate sums, and under similar restrictions, limitations, and conditions, as were imposed in the original bill.

Upon my amendments, as well as upon the merits of the whole subject, the necessity and propriety of a railroad communication between the Atlantic and Pacific States, and the constitutional power of Congress to afford Government aid in land and postal contracts, I submitted my views at some length during the last session. These views were well matured and have undergone no

change. I have no doubt whatever that Congress has the power, under the Constitution, to "dispose of the public territory" in this or any other way deemed to be for the general public good. It is a subject within the sound discretion of Congress; and ordinarily, railroad grants, as they are called, contribute largely to the public good. It is true they benefit individuals, those who own the roads; but it is not an objection to them in my view, if they, at the same time, do not diminish the value and price of the lands reserved by the Government, or lessen the aggregate sum for which the whole sell. If the Government, by the operation and effect of these grants, obtains as much money for the reserved alternate sections as the whole would command without the road, and sells them sooner, and at the same time stimulates their settlement and cultivation, thus increasing the population and wealth of the country and opening avenues of commerce and travel, I cannot, for the life of me, see what objection there can be to the exercise of this power, regulated and controlled always by a sound discretion, as to the objects of the grant and the necessity or propriety and value of the proposed road. Believing that we have the power to grant the lands, I do not doubt the expediency of making the grant in this case. If ever there was a necessity or propriety in building any railroad, and giving the aid of the Government to its construction, it exists, in my opinion, in this very case.

I shall not consume time in enumerating the reasons for the construction of this road; they are so numerous and so very obvious that none can doubt, and may be said to establish an absolute necessity. Nor have I any doubt that Congress may authorize and provide for a contract with the constructors of this railroad for the transportation of the United States mails, troops, munitions of war and other Government property, for a definite period of years, at a certain annual price, and may undertake to pay the contract price, either in whole or in part, in advance. This is also a question of mere expediency, within the constitutional powers of Congress, and only to be guided and governed by a sound and proper discretion. If, therefore, by the exercise of these constitutional powers, and within a wholesome discretion, the construction of this great work of public necessity and usefulness can be secured and accomplished, I think the obligation upon us to exercise the power is imperative. But sir, whilst I am a warm advocate for the construction of this road, and am ready and willing to grant Government aid, within constitutional bounds, and to a reasonable extent, I am not willing to vote an acre of land or a dollar of money towards the construction of a Pacific railroad which will be so located as to confer all its benefits upon one section of this Union. I made this objection at the last session, and I stand by it at this.

Now, sir, I have not a solitary doubt, that if only one road is provided for and the route is left open to be selected by the company who shall undertake it, a northern route will be adopted; making its immediate connections with the northern and northwestern roads, and pouring all its vast travel and freights over those roads and into the northern States and cities of this Union. The South may now and then get a straggling passenger, or a box of stray goods, but the great bulk of all its operations will be turned towards the North; and, sir, I cannot but be surprised that any southern Senator should be willing to vote such a magnificent donation of land and money to an enterprise from which his section is likely to derive such trifling profits. Will it be said, sir, that if the South has the best route, capitalists will build the road on that route? Is it likely that northern capital will be invested to construct a southern road? No, sir; not a dollar will ever be so spent. The political and sectional prejudices which pervade the northern people against the South would be sufficient of themselves to deter them. How much northern capital is ever invested in southern enterprises? It is a notorious fact, that whilst no northern railroad ever pays more than six per cent., and many of them pay less, whilst some pay nothing, there is scarcely a railroad in all the southern States that does not pay seven per cent., a large majority of them yield eight per cent., and many of them even more. And yet, sir, there is not one dollar of northern capital in a thousand, yea, probably not in ten thousand, invested in southern roads. Northern capitalists shun all southern investments as if the very touch was pollution.

Why, sir, whilst a northern man, with northern security, can borrow any amount of money in New York at from four to six per cent., per annum, I venture to say that even the Senator from South Carolina, [Mr. HAMMOND,] as wealthy as he is and as popular as he has lately rendered himself in the North by his Barnwell speech, if he were to go to New York and ask for a loan of \$10,000, and propose to mortgage his plantation and negroes, worth half a million, as security, he could not get a dollar. Such, sir, is the worthless opinion which northern capitalists have of southern securities, southern enterprises, and southern investments. And, sir, do you think that these feelings, these opinions, these prejudices, would not operate in the selection and construction of a Pacific railroad?

But, sir, there is even a more powerful cause than these, which would control the question of selection and force the road upon a northern route. Open this speculation to northern cupidity; put this glittering prize of twenty-five millions acres of the public land and twenty-five millions of Government money, in the shape of a twenty-five years' mail contract, up to competition, and who can doubt for a moment that it would be clutched by northern speculators and capitalists? And when we add to these the countless millions of commercial benefits and moneyed receipts which a Pacific railroad would bring to the section into which it is to run; when we look at the vast moneyed interests already invested in northern and western roads, and the large number of people concerned in them, all residing in the North and West—he must be indeed blind who could for a moment suppose that a southern route would be adopted. Do you think, sir, that the railroad companies of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, to say nothing of the New England States, with all their various, extended, and ramified interests, their numberless stockholders and vast moneyed and commercial connections and relations, would furnish the means or permit a southern road to be built? No, sir; they would have unlimited control over the subject, and would place the road where their own interests would be most promoted. I am not opposed to a northern road. I am willing to give the North the privilege of building one if they choose, and put them upon the same footing with the South. I am willing to grant land to a northern road, and give it the aid of a liberal mail contract; but I insist that the South shall be put on a perfect equality with the North. If the North can take the land and the mail contract, and raise the means to construct a northern road, let her do it. If the South, with like advantages, cannot do so, let the South suffer from the failure. All we want is to have an equal chance. Give us that, and, for one, I shall never murmur at or envy the North any benefits it may derive from a Pacific railroad built by its superior wealth or its superior enterprise. But I do object to and protest against any arrangement by which the aid of the Government is to be invoked to construct a work of internal improvement which is to be so unequal in its operations; which will confer untold benefits and blessings upon one, and comparatively none upon the other, section of the Union.

Sir, this unequal flow of the Government money and Government benefits into the great northern *maelstrom* has been going on long enough, and shall not continue longer by any vote of mine. I do not object to northern prosperity; but I insist that, in the dispensation of Government money and patronage, every section shall be put on an equality. Sir, if the statistical tables of Government expenditures were consulted, it would appear that more than three-fourths of the money and lands expended by the Government have been appropriated to the North and West, comprising the free States of this Union. It is all wrong, sir. If either section is to have the advantage, it should be the weaker one. The North boasts of her superior numerical strength and her great preponderance in wealth, and yet her Senators and Representatives in Congress let no opportunity escape, but are ever pressing and pushing forward every Government scheme that can add to these elements of power on the one hand, or weaken them on the other. Such, sir, have been the workings of the Federal Government since the formation of the Federal Union; and such, I apprehend, will be its workings as long as that Union lasts, or until the South asserts her equality of rights and benefits as the condition of remaining in the Union.

And speaking of the Union, sir, I take occasion to say that there is another reason connected with it, which makes me object to any bill, the provisions of which will secure the Government aid in the construction of a railroad to the Pacific, exclusively confined to the northern States. Sir, I believe that the time will come when the slave States will be compelled, in vindication of their rights, interests, and honor, to separate from the free States, and erect an independent Confederacy; and I am not sure, sir, that the time is not near at hand when that event will occur. At all events, I am satisfied that one of two things is *inevitable*; either that the slave States must surrender their peculiar institutions, or separate from the North. I do not intend, on this occasion, to enter into an elaborate or prolonged discussion of this proposition. I content myself with expressing my firm belief, and a brief allusion to the foundation of that opinion.

It is unnecessary to look back to the commencement of the anti-slavery agitation in the northern States, and to trace its regular and rapid growth to its present monstrous proportions. I remember twenty-five years ago, when petitions were first presented to Congress for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia; it was the beginning of the agitation, and was limited to a few deluded religious fanatics amongst the men, and some of the weaker sex, of the New England States. It nevertheless aroused the fears and excited the angry feelings of many of the southern people; it produced much discussion in Congress, and amongst the newspaper press of the southern States. Many expressed their belief that it was the beginning of a storm which was to sweep over the free States, carrying everything before it; but they were met with the syren song which the distinguished Senator from South Carolina has recently so eloquently poured forth, "there is no danger; slavery is too strong to be overturned; let the sound, conservative mind and heart of the North be appealed to, and all will be right; our friends there will protect us." Behold the result in the late elections! With the bold, undisguised declaration of hostility to slavery at the South, as enunciated by the great leader of its enemies at Rochester, with his loud-sounding pronunciamiento of "down with the accursed thing;" with the bloody flag of anti-slavery unfurled, and "war to the knife" written upon its folds, there is not at this day a majority of true, conservative friends of the rights of the South in a single free State of this Union this side of the Rocky Mountains. The demon of abolition, in his most hideous shape, has covered them all over with the footprints of his onward and remorseless march to power.

Sir, he knows but little of the workings of human nature, who supposes that the spirit of anti-slavery fanaticism which now pervades the northern heart will stop short of its favorite and final end and aim—the universal emancipation of slavery in the United States by the operation and action of the Federal Government. When Mr. Wilberforce began the agitation of his scheme of emancipation in the British West India Islands, there was not a corporal's guard in both Houses of the British Parliament who sympathized with him or approved the movement; and yet, in less than a quarter of a century, all England became abolitionized, and perpetrated, by a decree in Parliament, one of the most arbitrary and outrageous violations of private rights which was ever inflicted by despotic power upon peaceful and loyal subjects. And so it will be in this country. The same spirit which brought about emancipation in the British islands, will produce it *here* whenever the power is obtained to pass and to enforce its decrees. When the present Republican party, or its legitimate successors in some other name, shall get possession of the Government; when it has the President, both Houses of Congress, and the judiciary, what will stay its hand? It cannot stand still; if it does, it dies. To live and reign it must go on. Step by step it will be driven onward in its mad career until slavery is abolished or the Union dissolved. One of these two things is as inevitable as death.

I know that there are men even in the South, who like the distinguished Senator from South Carolina, argue that slavery is stronger and safer now in the Union than it ever has been—that the South, by unity and concert, can always combine with a party at the North sufficiently strong to carry the elec-

tions, and control the action of the Federal Government. In my opinion there never was a greater mistake. Suppose the election of President were to come off at this time, and all the southern States, including even Maryland, were united upon a candidate; how many free States would he carry? Perhaps California, and Oregon, if she is admitted; but not another State. The recent elections show clearly that the Abolitionists have not only a decided but an overwhelming majority, in every free State on the Atlantic slope. In all the late elections, conservative and sound Democracy, the only element sympathizing with the South, has not carried a single free State. I do not consider the triumph of the distinguished Senator from Illinois [Mr. DOUGLAS] as a victory of sound Democracy. It was a victory of Free-Soil Democracy over Abolition Whigery; and no more; and I would not give a copper for the difference. So far as the South and her constitutional rights are concerned, it was a victory over her and over them. I would not turn on my heel for choice between the Wilmot proviso and the squatter-sovereignty doctrine and policy of the Senator from Illinois. Indeed, sir, if I was driven to select between them, I would take the former. It is open, manly, and decisive; it settles the question at once, by debarring the southern people, *in terms*, from entering the Territories with their slave property, it is an open and undisguised denial of right to the South, which the South could resist or submit to, as her sense of honor or her policy might dictate, whilst the squatter-sovereignty doctrine and practice, as defined by its distinguished advocate, is plausible, delusive, deceptive, and fatal. No man of common sense can suppose that, under it, the South will ever obtain another foot of territory, or add another slave State to this Union. Both are political heresies, finding no authority in the Constitution; equally violative of the rights of the southern people, subversive of their equality in the Union, and an insult to their honor, which in my opinion, alike demand their reprobation and resistance.

The people of the southern States, as coequals in the Union, and as joint and equal owners of the public territory, have the right to emigrate to these Territories with their slave property, and to the protection and the enjoyment of that property *by law* during the existence of the territorial government; laws passed by Congress as the trustee and common head of the joint property—of all the States and all the people of the States in the public territory; laws recognizing the equal right of every citizen to go in and possess and enjoy the common inheritance; laws, not to deprive men of property, but to regulate and secure its enjoyment; laws to put every man in the United States upon an equal footing in the exercise of a great constitutional right. This, sir, is what we of the South are entitled to at the hands of a common Government; and we ought not to be content with less, or submit to its denial. I am free to declare here, that if I had the control of the southern people, I would demand this of Congress at the organization of every territorial government, as the terms upon which the South should remain in the Union. I would hold our “right” in one hand and “separation” in the other, and leave the North to choose between them. If you would do us justice, I would live with you in peace; if you denied us justice, I would not live with you another day.

Sir, abolition is advancing with rapid strides to the accomplishment of its great end, the universal emancipation of slavery in the United States. The distinguished Senator from New York, [Mr. SEWARD,] when he uttered his anathemas, and ushered forth his declaration of war against southern slavery at Rochester, understood well the feeling which sways, and is likely to sway, the masses in the northern States upon this important and exciting subject. The North intends to put down slavery at the South, “peaceably if they can, forcibly if they must.” It is true, the Senator from New York, the great embodiment of this abolition sentiment and will, has very kindly and condescendingly told the world that this great end and object are to be accomplished by “*constitutional means*!” What fool does not understand that? A majority party, controlling all the branches of the Government, and bent upon an object would have no difficulty in finding a grant of power in the Constitution for the accomplishment of any object. What better authority would they want than the power given to Congress to “provide for the general welfare” of the

United States? "Slavery, they say, is a great curse, a political, moral, and social evil; a dark and damning stain upon the national escutcheon; a blight upon its prosperity; a great and growing injury even to individuals and States who tolerate it. The national welfare demands its extinguishment, and Congress may and must do it." Here is the grant, and here the necessity and occasion of its exercise. What is to deter or hinder? The union of the southern people in presidential elections? That is the almighty panacea of some gentlemen. Such an idea is not folly only; it is treason against the South. The constitutional power will soon be found; there are more clauses than one which would justify such a proceeding upon the part of a bold and reckless majority. I have heard that John Quincy Adams once said, in a speech delivered in the House of Representatives, that there were so many clauses in the Constitution open to construction, that he could drive a four-horse wagon and team through forty places in it, and find authority in each to abolish slavery in the southern States; and so, sir, when the Republican party obtains the possession and control of the Government, President, Congress and Supreme Court, and shall feel secure of its power, and confident of success, there will not only be no constitutional barrier to stay its hand, but abundant authority will be found in the Constitution, *as it is*, to justify any measure its wisdom or its folly may prompt it to adopt.

Sir, there is but one path of safety for the institution of slavery in the South, when this mighty northern avalanche of fanaticism and folly shall press upon us; and that path lies through separation and to a southern confederacy. This is the great ultimate security for the rights, honor, and prosperity of the South. Sir, there are even now thousands of her sons who believe that the slave States, formed into a separate confederacy, and united under such a government as experience and wisdom would dictate, would combine elements of more political power, national prosperity, social security and individual happiness, than any nation of ancient or modern times; *and, sir, I am among the number*. This is not the time or place to enter upon the discussion of this proposition; if it were, the demonstration of its truth would be easy and irresistible. But whether this be so or not—whether the southern States would be better off in a separate confederacy or in the present Union, one thing is certain; and that is, that *no Union, or no slavery*, will sooner or later be forced upon the choice of the southern people. I do not say, sir, how or when the South will decide the question; but I will say that there is a large and growing party in many, if not in all of the southern States, in favor of separation *now* for causes already existing, as an object both of necessity and political expediency. Ten years ago, and scarcely a voice could be heard in all the South calculating the value of the Union. Now, their name is legion. As, at each recurring and returning crisis of agitation, the strength of the Abolition party increases at the North, so does the spirit of disunion increase at the South, and its advocates become more confident and defiant.

I venture the opinion that in my own State, so well convinced are the great mass of the people of all parties that the anti-slavery agitation is not to cease until the institution is destroyed, if the question was now put whether the southern States in a body should separate and form a southern confederacy, a majority would vote for the proposition. I do not say sir, that Georgia would secede alone, or together with a few of the other States, or with any number less than the whole; but I verily believe that if the separation of all of them in a body depended upon the voice of Georgia, that voice would boldly and promptly speak out—separation! I do not say, sir, that this sentiment would be unanimous; I know there are many who are conscientiously of opinion that the Union is the greatest political good; many for whom the Union has irresistible charms; many who would oppose separation from a dread of consequences; and some from interested motives would cling to the powers that be, and the things that are; they would say, let us trust still longer to the conservative feeling of the North; let us appeal to their patriotism, or to their interests; let us give them a Pacific railroad; let us give them high protective tariffs; let us vote millions of the public money to clean out their rivers and improve their harbors; let us feed them and fatten them and gorge them out

of the public crib, until, like young vultures, surfeited with filthy food, they vomit in our faces; let us *smother* their fanaticism with masses of gold and silver; and then, perhaps, they will let us keep our *niggers*! But, sir, these are not my sentiments, nor do I believe they are the sentiments of the great body of the people of my State. The majority already believe that northern aggression has gone far enough and ought not to be allowed to go further; they believe that southern rights and honor *out of the Union* are better than dishonor *within it*; they believe that slavery *without the Union* is better than the Union *without slavery*; and they are prepared, at the very next act of aggression from the North, to resist, even to the "disruption of all the ties which bind them to the Union." Nor do I believe, sir, that the people of Georgia or of the South will be disposed to wait for an *overt act* of aggression upon the rights, honor, or interests of the southern States.

The election of a northern President, upon a sectional and anti-slavery issue, will be considered cause enough to justify secession. Let the Senator from New York, [Mr. SEWARD,] or any other man avowing the sentiments and policy enunciated by him in his Rochester speech, be elected President of the United States, and, in my opinion, there are more than one of the southern States that would take immediate steps towards separation. And, sir, I am free to declare, here in the Senate, that whenever such an event shall occur, for one, *I shall be for disunion*, and shall, if alive, exert all the powers I may have in urging upon the people of my State the necessity and propriety of an immediate separation. I know, sir, that disunion is considered by many as an impossible thing; many think so at the South, and all the northern people feel assured that the South can never be driven out of the Union, no matter what may be the aggressions upon their constitutional rights. I trust and believe, sir, that they will find themselves mistaken, whenever a proper occasion occurs.

Sir, it is not so difficult a matter to dissolve this Union as many believe. Let the Republican party of the North obtain possession of the Government, and pass a Wilmot proviso; or abolish slavery in the District of Columbia; or repeal the fugitive slave law; or reform the Supreme Court, and annul the Dred Scott decision; or do any other act infringing upon the rights, impairing the equality, or wounding the honor of the slave States; or let them elect a President upon the avowed declaration and principle that freedom and slavery cannot exist together in the Union, and that one or the other must give way, and be sacrificed to the other, and the Union would be dissolved in six months. I do not believe, however, that such a result could or would be brought about by a general convention of all the slave States; it is doubtful whether all of them could be got into convention for any cause, and if they could, it is still more doubtful whether they could be harmonised and made to move together toward such a momentous end. But, sir, let a single State move upon the happening of any of these contingencies; let her swing out of the Union, and she would of necessity, very soon drag every other slave State out with her or after her.

Whenever any one of the southern States shall secede in vindication of her rights and honor, to protect her peculiar institution from the ruthless assaults of an anti-slavery majority in Congress, and an attempt to be made to force her back into the Union, or enforce the decrees of an arbitrary and unfriendly Government, her surrounding sister States, sympathizing with her in her bold and manly struggle for liberty and the right, would not hesitate for a moment to come to her relief, and join her in the assertion of an honorable independence, and the formation of another and better Union. Such a movement would necessarily result either in the formation of a confederacy of all the slave States, or to amendments of the present Constitution, placing their rights and equality upon a firmer and better basis than at present, as the condition upon which the seceding State or States would reunite with her former sisters. To attempt to force a seceding State back into the Union, with the surrounding States sympathizing with the feelings and causes which impelled her to secede, and interested in all that concerned her honor, her rights, and her independence, would be the veriest act of folly and madness which ever influenced or controlled a weak or wicked Government. No, sir; the ties of this Union once broken, and there

would be but one basis on which they could ever be reformed—*concession from the North; security for the South.*

And, sir, it is because I believe that separation is not far distant; *because* the signs of the times point too plainly to the early triumph of the Abolitionists, and their complete possession and control of every department of the Federal Government; and *because* I firmly believe that when such an event occurs the Union will be dissolved, that I am unwilling to vote so much land and so much money as this bill proposes, to build a railroad to the Pacific, which, in my judgment, will be created outside of a southern confederacy, and will belong exclusively to the North. Sir, the public lands now held by the United States, as well as the public Treasury, are the joint property of all the States and the people of this Union. They belong to the South as well as the North; we are entitled, *in the Union*, to our just and equal share, and if the Union is divided, then we are no less entitled to a fair proportion of the common fund.

What I demand, therefore, is, that the South shall be put upon an equality with the North, whether the Union lasts or not; that in appropriating the public lands and money, the joint property of all, in connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by railroad, the South shall have an equal chance to secure a road within her borders, to inure to her benefit whilst the Union lasts, and to belong to her when—if ever—that Union is dissolved. I am not willing to trust this matter to contingencies. I am not willing to trust the selection of the route for a single Pacific railroad to influences which, *as certain as fate itself*, will control its construction on a northern route, and exclude the southern section of the Union from its vast and numerous benefits. I have no desire to deprive the North of a road; I am willing to grant her the same amount of Government aid that I claim for the South. I believe that with twenty sections of land and \$10,000 to the mile, in Government bonds, a railroad can be built, by additional private enterprise, over either the thirty-second or thirty-fifth parallels of north latitude. If one can be constructed over a more northern route with the same amount of Government aid, let them have it. If both sections are placed upon an equality, and either fails, the fault, or the misfortune, will be hers. Neither will have cause of complaint.

Now, sir, for the purpose of accomplishing my object, I move that this bill be recommitted to the special committee who had charge of the subject at the last session, with instructions to bring in a bill providing for the construction of a railroad on each of two routes to the Pacific ocean.